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their own angels, called *angelozebi* or *batonebi*, meaning lords. Because of their presence the people fall ill with smallpox, typhoid fever, scarlet fever, and other contagious diseases. When someone becomes ill it is not necessary to appeal to the physicians and their remedies, because by such action it is possible to offend and anger the angels of sickness. . . ." And as the only remedy in curing the sick person, the people must "please" the evil spirits with every kind of performance—dancing, singing, playing on the various musical instruments, decorating the sick person's room, etc.; and beseeching them to leave the sick person.

The information concerning the existence of similar beliefs and practices is reported from all parts of Georgia, as, for example, in the writings of T. Mamaladze,[58] A. Sagaradze,[59] Japaridze, and others.

In every kind of mischief the people try to find out the possible cause, as they think, of the anger of the spirits by various means of divination. There are different ranks of diviners, known under their Georgian names as *mlotsavi, mkitkhavi, mesultane,* and *kadagi.*

A *mlotsavi* is a person of either sex, who knows special prayers for every kind of illness and affliction. The name *mlotsavi* is derived from the Georgian word *lotsva,* meaning "a prayer." The people believe that the *mlotsavi* can heal by his prayers because he enjoys special favors in the eyes of the spirits and that his prayers will be answered and the sick man restored to health.

The prayers which are said by the *mlotsavi* are interesting for their figurative language as well as for the psychological phenomenon which they express. As examples we mention the prayers recorded by Japaridze,[60] and Mindeli[61] from the province of Ratcha; those recorded by Mamaladze[62] from the province of Guria; and those recorded by V. Bardavelidze-Lomia[63] from the province of Kartli.

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[58] Mamaladze: 45-6.
[59] Sagaradze.
[60] Japaridze: 131-37.
[61] Mindeli: 138.
[62] Mamaladze: 110-12.
[63] Bardavelidze-Lomia: 104.

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The *mkitkhavi* are diviners. A *mkitkhavi* can be a man or a woman, although they are more often women than men. The *mkitkhavi* tells of the future, using water, grain, or beans as media, or by winding and unwinding a piece of thread on a plank, and by many other manipulations.

The *mkitkhavi* may sometimes even be attendants at the Khevsur sanctuary (*dekanozi*).[84] In such case the relatives of a sick person who seek the help of the diviner (the *dekanozi*) are obliged to bring a sheep to him; he kills the animal and performs the rite called "the washing of hands and shoulders" (in the Georgian, *khel-mkhris dabana,* from the words *kheli*—hand; *mkhari*—shoulder; and the verb *dabana,* meaning "to wash"). The meaning of this custom is based on the belief that the blood of the slain animal will wash away the afflictions of the sick person.

It is necessary to note that not only a *dekanos*—a servant of the distorted and heathen religion of the Khevsurs—but even the priests of the Greek Catholic Church did not shy at the business of divination.

The different manners of divination, like many other customs and practices—such as the bringing of special sacrifices to the *Khati,* funeral and commemorative ceremonies, curing of diseases, etc.—are founded on the belief of the people in the existence of spirits (both good and evil), and upon their cult of the dead. And we believe that these religious observances account for the widespread customs of hospitality among the Georgians, which will be discussed in the ensuing chapter.

[84] Eirstov: 101-2.

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In describing the customs of the Georgian Highlanders and the Georgians in general pertaining to the protection of women and children against the aggression of evil spirits, we found that iron is regarded by them as possessed with special magical power. Not only iron as a metal, but also the profession connected with it, as that of a blacksmith, is viewed by the people as supernatural and endowed with magical power. This is clearly seen in the beliefs of the Georgians of Samurzagan.[88]

Not only iron as a metal, but also the blacksmith's trade, all objects associated with it, and the person of the blacksmith himself are regarded by the people as endowed with supernatural or magical powers. The people look with reverence and fear on the blacksmith's anvil. They expect from it the healing of the sick and help in all kinds of difficulties of their earthly life. They take the oath upon the anvil and are convinced that the oath-breaker will be severely punished with some kind of misfortune. Believing in the supernatural power of the anvil, they offer to it numerous gifts, consisting of goats, oxen, and money. Some do this out of gratitude, others from fear. One suspected of theft or a debtor refusing to meet his obligations is compelled to take the oath on the anvil in order to clear himself of suspicion.

Like the blacksmith's anvil, the person of the blacksmith also is held in high esteem by the people. The blacksmith is regarded as a diviner and sorcerer. If someone is ill he sends one of his relatives or friends to the blacksmith for help and to find out the cause of the illness. The blacksmith either satisfies the petitioner himself or announces secretly in a mysterious way that the affliction is sent either as punishment for some wrong committed by the ill person or simply that the anvil demands from the stricken person a fitting offering. Usually the kind of offering is indicated, as a white goat with straight horns, or a brown ox with a long tail reaching to the ground, or perhaps money. It is necessary to note that in naming the animals to be offered or the money to be paid, the blacksmith takes into consideration the economic status of the petitioner, and in his choice sacrifical

[88] Machavariani, D., and Bartolomei, A.: 74-83.

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animals, he usually selects the best breed known in the community. If after consultation with the blacksmith and presentation of the offering the sick man recovers, the result is fame and new presents and offerings to the blacksmith and his anvil; but in the event the man dies, the explanation is that the relatives of the sick person did not know how to appease the anvil, or they did not apply to the right blacksmith's shop and anvil, as it should have been, etc. These superstitious beliefs of the people give to the blacksmiths, besides the profits mentioned, a further advantage in that they may keep the doors of their homes and shops wide open during the day or night without fear of having their property stolen, despite the fact that the people are not very strict in the proper interpretation of the words "mine" and "thine."

Beliefs similar to those just described concerning the supernatural power of iron are found among other peoples of the Caucasus. For example, the Circassians have a special deity, the protector of blacksmiths, called *Tliebse,* about whom M. Taitbout de Marigny[39] relates that "le jour de sa fete, on fait, en son honneur, des libations sur un soc et une hache. . . ."

Besides using iron as a protective power against evil creatures, the people use fire also. Thus the Georgians of Imerethi[40] believe that the evil being of the woods, called *chinka,* is afraid of the fire. In the evening, no one is permitted to enter the room of a pregnant woman without previously warming himself before the fire in the fire-place. If one neglects to take this precaution, the evil spirit may follow the newcomer into the room and drive the woman mad.

Among the Georgians of Meskhethi,[41] if a traveler comes at night into a house where there is a woman with child, he must first cleanse himself of the evil spirit (*avi suli*) who may otherwise enter the room with him. In order to avoid this danger and to cleanse the traveler, he is required to jump over a burning pile and allow himself to be sprinkled with holy water.

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[39] Taitbout de Marigny: b, 309.
[40] Mashurko: 369.
[41] Khakhanov: b, 11.

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4. ORDEAL

695 In cases where decisions were difficult, and where the judges were not able to detect the guilt of the suspect, they resorted to the ordeal, which had, in the eyes of the people, the meaning of God's judgment, since they believed that "by the issue of the ordeal the gods themselves were held to show on which side the right was."[38]

The ordeals used by the Georgian Highlanders were the same as those in universal practice in the ancient Georgian legislation, when the people were governed by custom, and which were later included in the famous Georgian Code of King Vakhtang VI.

Prince Vakhusht relates in his work that in order to find out who was the guilty party suspected in a theft, boiling water and a hot iron were used in Georgia.[39]

The ordeals which were practiced by the Georgians were: (1) the water ordeal, (2) the hot iron ordeal, and (3) the boiling water ordeal.

The water ordeal consisted of the following procedure: The suspected criminal or criminals, together with their accuser, were led to the bank of a river. Their hands and feet were then tied with cords, and in this condition they were thrown into the river. The person whose body remained on the surface of the water was regarded as the guilty one, and was consequently punished. The people believed that the body of a culprit was always rejected by the river, and that the innocent one was kept by the water. Consequently, the person whose body remained under water was considered innocent.

791 Nobody in Megrelia doubts the existence of sorcerers and 695 witches, and because of this belief there have been cases of a 754 highly dramatic nature. For example, after the Turkish War, in the villages near the town of Zugdidi, the epizooty broke out. This phenomenon was ascribed by the people to the action of witches, and in order to find out who they were, a Turk from the neighboring Georgian province of Samursakan was called. The

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[38] Hartland: 175.
[39] Vakhusht: 6-7.

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Turk was famous for his ability to discern witches. Arriving at the village, the Turk ordered all the old women of the village to be called together and thrown into the river. Those who sank were cleared of suspicion, but those who did not were pronounced witches. A few unfortunate women who were kept afloat, perhaps by their clothes, were pronounced guilty of the practice of witchcraft and responsible for the calamity.[40]

During the procedure of the hot iron ordeal, as practiced by the Georgians, an iron shred from a plow was heated until it was as red as burning coal; then it was placed on an elevated place in such a manner that it would be easy for a man to put his hands under it. Paper was put on the hands of the suspect, and he was obliged to take the iron with his hands, take three steps, and then throw it away. After this his hands were immediately bandaged and kept so for three days, after which time the bandages were removed. If his hands were not burned, the suspect was liberated; if they were, he was regarded as guilty and was therefore punished.

In the execution of the hot water ordeal, a boiler or big pot of boiling water was used. Into this was thrown a piece of iron, usually a horseshoe, which, with the introduction of Christianity, was changed to a small iron cross. The suspect was obliged to take the piece of iron out of the boiling water with his bare hand. After this the procedure was the same as in the hot iron ordeal; that is, the hand was wrapped and kept so for three days, after which the bandages were removed. If the hand showed no marks of burns, the suspect was pronounced innocent; otherwise, he was punished as guilty of the crime.

The ordeals practiced by the Tushes were the use of boiling water and hot iron. Here is a case known to me, in which boiling water was used. In a mill a number of women were suspected of having stolen a sack of flour. In order to detect the thief, it was decided to boil some water and put a horseshoe in it; the woman who burned her hand in taking it out would be adjudged guilty. Only one, by the name of Jabiani, proved to be uninjured after the test, and she was consequently acquitted. The rest of the women

[40] Borozdin: 34.

C. G. 793 hereditary rights. The priest, called khevis beri "elder of the valley," khutsi "priest" or dek'anozi "dean," pronounced the ceremonial C. G. [782] prayers and sacrificed the sheep and cows offered as victims. The kadagi or dzhvaris C. G. [791] meene "interpreter," "tongue of the dzhvari," a kind of shaman, pronounced the will of the khat'i. The medroshe "standard bearer" or khat'is pekhi "foot of the khat'i" carried the sacred banner (drosha) on festive days. A special functionary attended to the brewing of the sacred beer, a custom borrowed from the C. G. [795] Ossetes. The beer was drunk at the annual festivals which were attended by all the "serfs" of the khat'i.

In Svanetia the functions of the Khevsur khevis beri were performed by priests not regularly ordained and without any theological training; they were called bap (from Greek C. G. [771] pappas). The numerous ancient churches were neglected and were only used for storing the vessels, vestments and books relating to the divine service; these were jealously C. G. 796 guarded from alienation. Many originally Christian feasts and Saint's days were celebrated with prayers, drinking of home-made brandy and eating of sacrificed animals and C. G. [769] fancy bread of different traditional shapes. Similar rites were observed on the commemoration days of the dead which were performed at fixed intervals.